

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 01211 111452Z
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5325
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PGOV, CZ
SUBJECT: FURTHER ON AP CORRESPONDENT EXPULSION

1. AT DINNER MAY 4, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER TRHLIK STRONGLY
RESTATED TO AMBASSADOR BYRNE HIS GOVERNMENT'S UNHAPPINESS THAT
ACCORDING TO NYT ARTICLE BY RICHARD BURT, USG HAS TAKEN WITH SOME
SERIOUSNESS ALLEGATIONS OF CZECH TIES WITH ITALIAN RED BRIGADES AND
OTHER TERRORISTS. AMBASSADOR REPLIED EQUALLY STRONGLY THAT USG
IS, OF COURSE, CONCERNED ABOUT TOTAL PROBLEM OF TERRORISM AND, AS
TRHLIK WELL KNEW, USG HAS NO CONTROL OVER WAY OUR PRESS OPERATES
AND HANDLES STORIES. HE POINTED OUT THAT OFFICIAL PARTY NEWSPAPER
HERE HAD COUPLED COMPLAINT ABOUT BURT ARTICLE WITH RABID ATTACK ON
CIA ACTIVITIES.

2. AFTER EXCHANGE ON THE ISSUE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT REGIME
COULD NOT EXPECT WHAT IT WOULD CONSIDER "BALANCED" TREATMENT
FROM WESTERN PRESS AS LONG AS IT CONTINUED TO HARASS FOREIGN
JOURNALISTS, INCLUDING EXPULSION ON TRUMPED-UP "CRIMINAL CHARGES."
HE CITED CASE OF AP'S ROBERT REID WHO HAD BEEN EXPELLED ON CHARGES,
ACCORDING TO DEP FONMIN JABLONSKI, OF HAVING ENGAGED IN ILLICIT
FOREIGN JOURNALISTS. HE INDICATED THAT IN ANY CASE THE REID
AFFAIR WAS BEING HANDLED BY DEP FONMIN JABLONSKY.

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3. THIS ATTITUDE WAS REFLECTED ALSO BY MFA 6TH DEPARTMENT HEAD
ZANTOVSKY AT LUNCHEON FOR STAFF DEL MAJAK. AFTER SPINNING USUAL
LINE ABOUT NEED FOR WESTERN JOURNALISTS TO BE "OBJECTIVE, ZANTOVSKI
ADMITTED THAT ON OCCASION GOC HAD DROPPED BALL AND MISHANDLED
JOURNALISTS. AT THAT MOMENT, AMERICANS PRESENT WERE TOO POLITE
TO EMPHASIZE HOW TRUE HIS WORDS WERE.

4. COMMENT: NEITHER OF CONVERSATIONAL PARTNERS ARE PEOPLE WHOSE STATEMENTS AND SURFACE ATTITUDES WE TRUST, BUT IT STRUCK US THAT MFA PEOPLE CAME, IN EFFECT, CLOSE TO APOLOGIZING FOR ACTION AGAINST REID WHICH WE ASSUME WAS DICTATED BY MORE POWERFUL ELEMENT OF PARTY BUREAUCRACY. THEIR STATEMENTS FURTHER CONFIRM AMBASSADOR'S CERTAINTY THAT CHARGES AGAINST REID WERE A FRAME-UP. IN THIS REGARD, WITHOUT STIRRING UP MATTERS ANY FURTHER, WE WOULD APPRECIATE BEING INFORMED OF ANY AP REACTION TO CTK DISPATCH, ACCUSING REID OF HAVING USED VISIT HERE TO ENRICH HIMSELF, AND ANY OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION.

DECONTROL FOKUR YEARS FROM ORIGINATING DATE.
FROWICK

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